



**For Immediate Release**

**Contact:** Bob Rouse, [bob.rouse@NTAstaff.com](mailto:bob.rouse@NTAstaff.com), +1.859.264.6548

**U.S. Takes Top Honor at World Travel Fair**

NTA Visit USA Center in China celebrates award, increased tourism

LEXINGTON, Ky. USA (July 28, 2011)—There's a new plaque on the wall of the NTA Visit USA Center in Shanghai, China. The United States won first place—the Gold Award—in the “My Dream Destination” competition at the World Travel Fair in Shanghai.

The travel fair hosted more than 500 exhibitors from 45 countries/regions. Some 3,000 attendees cast votes at the fair for the country that presented the most desirable destination. Switzerland won the silver award in the competition, and Japan took the bronze.

“Through our work at the NTA Visit USA Center, we hear every day about the desire Chinese travelers have for visiting the U.S.,” said Lisa Simon, NTA president. “We know that group leisure travel is how many Chinese are able to experience the diversity of U.S. destinations, and NTA has seen a marked increase in travelers coming to the United States. And, they're spending more money, which bodes well for U.S. tour operators, suppliers and destinations.”

NTA and U.S. Commercial Service co-hosted the show's U.S. Pavilion and are also partners in the NTA Visit USA Center, which opened last fall in Shanghai. Along with marketing the United States for leisure travel, the center connects Chinese travel agents with U.S. tour operators.

For the U.S. Commercial Service, the goal is to turn a dream destination into a reality, said William Brekke, Principal Commercial Officer for the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai. “More and more Chinese citizens are now able to travel abroad, and we want them to choose the

United States for group travel,” Brekke said. “We’ve seen a big increase so far in 2011, and the potential impact on U.S. jobs is tremendous.”

The number of tourists from China grew nearly 33 percent during the first quarter of 2011, compared to the same period last year, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. And last year’s total number of Chinese visitors, just over 800,000, is four times the number of visitors in 2003. Spending, too, is on the rise: The \$5 billion dollars spent by Chinese tourists in 2010 represents a 39 percent increase over the previous year.

**About NTA:** Now celebrating its 60th year, NTA is the leading association for professionals serving travelers to, from and within North America. Formerly the National Tour Association, the organization became NTA when its global membership (more than 40 countries) and focus exceeded its name. For more information, visit <http://www.ntaonline.com/>. Look there for the link to NTA’s China Inbound Program.

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